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Invitations show enthusiasm for Great Places; coaches dispatched across the state

DÉS MOINES – The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs announced today it received 145 invitations from places wanting to partner with the state to become “Great Places” through the Iowa Great Places Initiative. About 75 coaches from throughout state government are being dispatched in teams to all the places that submitted invitations. Coaches will work with the places throughout the summer to help them move their Great Place visions forward.

“The number – and the quality – of the invitations we received show the tremendous enthusiasm for Great Places,” Department of Cultural Affairs Director Anita Walker said. “Iowans clearly accepted the challenge to think about what was genuine and authentic about their places and dream about what it would take to make them great places.”

Coaches will help places identify next steps and assess their readiness to present offers to the Great Places Citizen Advisory Board to be considered one of the pilot Great Places. The board will select three pilots in early October.

“Each and every one of the 145 places that extended invitations will benefit from the Great

Places initiative through the coaching process and new training opportunities,” Walker said. “The three pilot Great Places will be part of our learning laboratory in this first year of Great Places, during which the state will explore coordinated, focused ways to deliver technical and financial assistance to deliver powerful results.”

Governor Tom Vilsack announced the Great Places initiative in his 2005 Condition of the State address, challenging state agencies and Iowans to be bold and creative and develop new partnerships for turning neighborhoods, communities, districts, regions and other areas into great places where people want to live, work, stay and play. A team representing 18 state agencies designed a Great Places process, which began in May with 10 forums throughout the state. More than 1,000 people participated in the forums, where they learned about the opportunity to submit Great Places invitations.

A list of Great Places invitations for local communities follows: City of Montrose, Fairfield, Historic Bonaparte Pottery, Bonaparte, Louisa County, Maharishi Vedic City, Mount Pleasant, Villages of Van Buren, Van Buren County. Invitations can be viewed at www.iowagreatplaces.gov.